(ii) To discharge the liabilities of ITI to the tune of Rs. 2820 crores, to clean up the ITI balance sheet.

(iii) In principle decision to provide support of Rs. 180 crore to ITI for working capital margin.

Modernization of post offices

2116. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether after successful completing modernization of 500 post offices, mostly in rural areas, the Department has now decided to extend this ambitious project to 4500 more post offices across the country offering efficient services to customers through use of modern technology;

(b) whether Department will spend Rs. 900 crores for upgrading infrastructure of post offices giving them better connectivity through broadband and providing internet facilities to customers; and

(c) if so, the total number of post offices at present modernized and to what extent it has improved their efficiency?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI GURUDAS KAMAT): (a) No, Sir. However Department of Posts is extending the scheme "Project Arrow" to another 500 post offices across the country during 2009-10 with financial outlay of Rs. 65 crores.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Under project Arrow, Department of Posts has modernized 500 Post Offices in 2008-09 and is modernizing another 500 Post Offices in 2009-10 with a aim to improve the "Look and Feel" of the post offices and strengthen core business by providing quality services to customers within stipulated time. A significant quality important has been registered in core business after modernization of these post offices for e.g.. Money Order delivery has improved from 76% to 94.5% , Registered Mails delivery from 84% to 97.3%, Speed Post delivery from 89% to 98.2% and Ordinary Mail delivery from 97% to 99.7%.

Independent spectrum regulator

2117. SHRI NANDAMURI HARIKRISHNA:
SHRI M.V. MYSURA REDDY:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that his Ministry wants an independent spectrum regulator to oversee all the related issues like allocation, pricing, monitoring and withdrawal of airwaves;

(b) if so, the details of the proposal;

(c) whether it is also a fact that his Ministry is going to introduce a Bill in Parliament for this purpose; and

(d) if so, the other salient features of the proposed Bill?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI GURUDAS KAMAT): (a) and (c) No, Sir.

(b) and (d) Do not arise in view of (a) and (c) above.

Tele density in rural areas

2118. SHRI K.E. ISMAIL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that though India is a fast growing telecom markets in the world, the tele density in rural areas is very low; and

(b) if so, the details and measures that are being taken to accelerate telecom growth in rural India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI GURUDAS KAMAT): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The percentage of tele-density in the rural areas of our country is 16.54% as on 31.05.2009 against the target of 4% rural tele-density by year 2010, as per New Telecom Policy 1999. However, following steps are being taken by the Government to further increase the telecom facilities in rural areas of the country:—

1. To meet the demand of wireline telephones in rural areas, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) is now laying cable up to 5 Kms. of exchange against the earlier standard of 2.5 Kms.

2. BSNL has deployed Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) network in rural areas to meet the demand of scattered and far-flung rural areas. It now plans to further expand its WLL network (MSC based).

3. Remote and far-flung areas, which are not possible to be covered with terrestrial technology, are planned to be covered with Digital Satellite Phone Terminals (DSPTs).

4. Support is being provided from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) for provisioning of Rural Direct Exchange Lines (RDELs) in all the 1685 net cost positive Short Distance Charging Areas (SDCAs).

5. A scheme has been launched by USO Fund to provide subsidy support for setting up and managing 7440 number of infrastructure sites (towers) in 500 districts spread over 27 States, for provision of mobile services in the specified rural and remote areas, where there is no existing fixed wireless or mobile coverage in the country. Also about 10128 number of additional infrastructure sites (towers) are proposed to be installed in the second phase.